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REMARKS:

Claims 1-10 were pending and considered. Claims 1-10 were rejected. In response, claims 1 and 10 have been amended. New claim 11 has been added. Following entry of this amendment claims 1-11 are pending. Reconsideration and allowance are respectfully requested.

The Examiner has objected to the drawings, stating, "the limitation 'sealing mechanism - overmolded integrally with the head of the grommet' (claim 10) must be shown or the feature(s) cancelled from the claim(s)."

In response to the objection to the drawings, Applicant respectfully submits that Fig. 1 and Fig. 2 of the drawings filed with the application already show a sealing mechanism overmolded integrally with the head of the grommet. The Examiner's attention is directed to paragraph [14] of the specification, in which it is clearly explained that the embodiment illustrated in Figures 1 and 2 includes a sealing mechanism 34 which is overmolded onto grommet 12. Paragraph [14] describes the embodiment illustrated as follows:

"In the embodiment illustrated in Figures 1 and 2, the sealing mechanism 34 is overmolded into the head 14 of the grommet 12 by first forming a cavity 36 in or through the head 14 into which the sealing mechanism 34 can be received." (Emphasis added.)

Thus, Applicant believes that no drawing correction is required in that Figs. 1 and 2 already illustrate an embodiment having an overmolded sealing mechanism, which is explained in the specification complete with reference numerals identifying the relevant parts thereof. Applicant respectfully requests that the Examiner reconsider and remove the objection to the drawings.

Claims 9 and 10 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph. The Examiner states that the structure of the "sealing mechanism" is indefinite, and asks the question, "What does the term 'overmolded' mean?"

An overmolding process is a common molding process well-known in the industry. A part produced thereby is said to be "overmolded". During overmolding, a first part or a portion of an

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item is formed in a first molding step. Subsequently, in a second molding step, a second portion or an attachment or extension to the first molded piece is molded onto, over, into or in some way connected to the first molded piece. Overmolding is a known two-shot molding process. In an overmolding process, the same or different materials can be used for successive overmolding steps. Each portion or molding shot can be performed using materials best suited for the portion of the item being formed during the overmolding step.

The term is well-known, commonly used and understood in the art. A "quick search" on the USPTO website of the U.S. Patent Office patent collection from 1976 to and including patents issued August 10, 2004, identified 1,837 patents in which the term "overmolded" was used. The term "overmold" was found in 692 patents, and the term "overmolding" was identified in 1,357 issued U.S. Patents during the same period. Thus, Applicant respectfully submits that the terms are well-known and widely used, and are not indefinite.

In the context of the present invention, the basic body of grommet 12 can be formed in a first molding step. In a second step of the overmolding process, an overmolded sealing mechanism 34 is formed onto the previously formed grommet 12. Claim 9 clearly recites that the sealing mechanism is a single molded piece. Claim 10 has been amended to more clearly recite that the head of the grommet has a part formed therethrough configured for receiving the sealing mechanism which is overmolded integrally with the head of the grommet. Applicant is of the belief that claims 9 and 10 clearly and distinctly claim the subject matter regarded as the invention, and that the rejection under 35 U.S.C. §112 should be removed.

Claims 1-10 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent 6,264,393 (Kraus) and U.S. Patent 5,217,337 (Junemann, et al.). In response, claim 1 has been amended. Accordingly, Applicant is of the opinion that claim 1 recites an invention not taught by the prior art, and that all of claims 1-10 should be allowed.

Kraus teaches a connection unit that "includes four (4) parts." (Column 3, line 32.) A connection element 1 has an upper piece 3 attached to a plate element, and a lower piece 4 connected with a support element 2. Counter stops 40, 40' are located along an axis of lower piece 4. A neck shaped intermediate region 5 includes locking elements 10 arranged at strips 14

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of the intermediate zone 5. A casing component 15 includes a jacket zone 17 having an interior surface fitted with counter stops 18. Counter stops 18 are sized for engaging locking elements 10 of intermediate zone 5 (column 3, lines 31-44). A sealing element includes a circumferential bulge 27 and an adjacent sealing lip 28. A sealing plate 42 adjoins sealing lip 28 or circumferential bulge 27. Plate 42 passes over and into an end ring 45. At least one rib 50 is arranged on the surface of end ring 45. End ring 45 includes a funnel opening 49 which is penetrated by the intermediate zone 5. The outer diameter of end ring 45 is adapted for contacting the inner wall 47 of jacket zone 17 in casing component 15 (column 3, lines 50-61). Kraus shows a unit in which four separate components must be assembled during installation and use. Thus, assembly is complicated. Four separate individual components must be properly aligned and connected.

In contrast to the teaching of Kraus, claim 1 as amended in part recites a grommet with:

... a head having an undersurface...;

a sealing mechanism coupled to the head of the grommet ... with a first portion thereof forming a substantially water-tight seal between an undersurface of the head and a surface of the first object and a second portion thereof forming a substantially water-tight seal between the pin and the bore defined by the head and body of the grommet; ...

No such grommet with a head and no sealing mechanism coupled to the head is taught or suggested by Kraus. Consequently, Kraus does not teach or suggest a sealing mechanism having a first portion forming a substantially water-tight seal between an undersurface of the head of a grommet and a surface of the object to which it is attached, as recited in claim 1. Further, Kraus does not teach or suggest a second portion of a sealing mechanism forming a substantially water-tight seal between a pin and a bore defined by the head and body of a grommet, as recited in amended claim 1.

Junemann, et al. teaches a fastening device for protective strips having an upper part 1 and a lower part 2. Lower part 2, shown in Figs. 3 and 4, has an annular socket casing 15 sized to be inserted into a fastening hole 24 in a bearer plate 4. A sealing diaphragm or flange 16 flares outwardly and downwardly to seal against plate 4 (column 3, lines 10-22). A second annular sealing diaphragm or flange 23 flares outwardly and upwardly in a direction opposite first sealing diaphragm 16 (column 3, lines 43-50).

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In contrast to the teaching of Junemann, et al, claim 1 as amended in part recites a grommet with:

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a sealing mechanism coupled to the head of the grommet ... with a first portion thereof forming a substantially water-tight seal between an undersurface of the head and a surface of the first object and a second portion thereof forming a substantially water-tight seal between the pin and the bore defined by the head and body of the grommet; ...

No such grommet with a head and no sealing mechanism coupled to the head is taught or suggested by Junemann et al. Consequently, Junemann et al. does not teach or suggest a sealing mechanism having a first portion forming a substantially water-tight seal between an undersurface of the head of a grommet and a surface of the object to which it is attached, as recited in claim 1. Further, Junemann et al. does not teach or suggest a second portion of a sealing mechanism forming a substantially water-tight seal between a pin and a bore defined by the head and body of a grommet, as recited in claim 1.

The present invention for a water-tight a grommet provides an effective water-tight seal for the mounting interface of the grommet and the object to which it is attached, and for the attachment of a pin to the grommet. The grommet is easy to use and assemble in that the sealing mechanism is connected to or coupled with the grommet. Accordingly, Applicant is of the opinion that claim 1 recites an invention not taught or suggested by Kraus or Junemann et al., alone or in combination, and that claim 1 should be allowed. Claims 2-10 depend from claim 1 and include all of the limitations thereof while adding further specificity to the invention recited therein. Accordingly, claims 2-10 also should be allowed.

New claim 11 has been added, reciting a structure by which the overmolded sealing mechanism is affixed to the grommet. The structures recited in new claim 11 are described in paragraph [14] of the application as filed, and are shown in Figures 1 and 2 of the drawings as filed. Consequently, new claim 11 is fully supported by the original disclosure. Applicant respectfully submits that the prior art does not teach or suggest a water-tight grommet having a head of the grommet configured as recited in new claim 11, with a sealing mechanism associated therewith as recited in new claim 11. A grommet as recited in new claim 11 has a sealing

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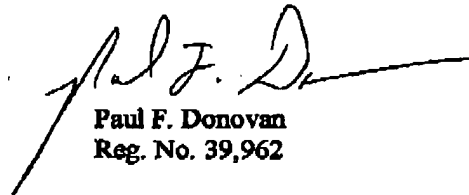
mechanism securely positioned for effective performance, simplifying use of the grommet. Accordingly, Applicant submits that new claim 11 should be allowed. Consideration and allowance of new claim 11 are respectfully requested.

No new matter has been added by way of the amendments and remarks made herein.

Reconsideration and allowance of all the remaining pending claims are respectfully requested.

In the event that there are any issues that can be expedited by telephone conference, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned at the number indicated below.

Respectfully submitted,



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